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ABSTRACT

In the process of classroom teaching and learning, feeling something in one's body, as a basis for thinking, represents the uncertain area which can never be physically seen. Yet, this area calls for reaffirmation as "knowledge" and needs to be recognized as one of the major factors composing a knowledge base for the promotion of teacher education. Classroom teaching which acknowledges this principle can be described as "classroom teaching which brings to life." This type of classroom teaching is impeded if there is a separation and/or differentiation between heart and body and if knowledge is provided only through language. In the relationship of teachers to students, there must be consideration for the personal knowledge of individual students. Intuition closely related to the individual student's body should be taken into account. Uncertainty on the part of the teacher attaches to this approach to classroom teaching and learning. Such uncertainty should not be conceived of as a negative element to be eliminated. Education always involves uncertainty, and it is only when the existence of uncertainty is accepted that we begin to see a new dimension of education emerge where the personal knowledge and the quality of individual children are recognized and respected as they should be. (IAH)

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A Philosophical Approach to the "Knowledge Base" in Teacher Education

— Recognizing the Element of Uncertainty in Teaching —

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1. The question at issue: classroom work through one's body

"Controlled and closed bodies; inflexible space in a classroom which never come in contact; the language which has lost the power to evoke imagination; the classroom teaching and learning which takes its course prompted by the verbal exchange of messages which never seem to get across."(1) This is the quotation which was orally presented by Professor Manabu Sato at Tokyo University, one of the members of the Japan-United States Teacher Education Consortium. To be more specific, this has been quoted from the preface of the class observation report of The Teaching of Japanese in the Classroom issued by Teachers' Association of the Jpanese Language Education under the joint guidance of Professor Tadahiko Inagaki at Tokyo University, who is also one of members of this Consortium.

The linguistic material used in the classroom, which is found in the book entitled The Japanese Language edited by Shuntaro Tanigawa, Makoto Ohoka, Mitsumasa Anno and Choku Matsui, published by Fukuinkan. What was used was a poem called "Language and Body."

Go out in the school playground and,
Say,"The sky," as you look up to the sky.
Say, "The wind," as you run about,
Making belief that you're a wind.
How do you feel, I wonder?

Language springs out from inside your body.

Stand by the tree,
And feel for the word tree inside your body.
Your feet become its roots,
Your body is stems,
Your hands become its branches and leaves.

Weak voices, loud voices,
High voices, low voices,
Say, "Trees" in whichever voice you like.
Don't you feel as if you became woods?

The actual classroom teaching was carried out in a class of junior grade students of elementary school and their classroom work was centered around the interpretation of the implied meaning of the poem. The aim of this class, which teachers had earlier agreed on, was to help the students realize that there ia always a feeling behind language or from inside one's body arises language. The report further states that being prompted by the heart of the poem, both the teacher and students ended up being in the school playground and kept saying, "The sky," while looking up to the real blue sky.

This classroom observation report involving the teaching of the poem "Language and Body" was presented by three teachers and it was followed by comments from the participants and advisers. The notes of all the comments have been written down and put forward to Shuntaro Tanigawa, one of the authors of THE JAPANESE LANGUAGE which contains the poem in question. His comment simply indicates that in the process of classroom teaching and learning feeling something in ones body so as to think represents the uncertain area which can physically never be seen as such, but that this area calls for reaffirmation as "knowledge" which needs to be intuitively recognized as one of the major factors composing knowledge base for the promotion of teacher education. Tanigawa's comment is quoted as follows.

> "Human beings actually see the real sky before learnig the word sky, but without knowing how to describe it in language, it would be impossible to distinguish the sky from something else to identify it. But at the same time, even without the knowledge of the expression sky, it is agreed that we have the heart and body which makes us react to those mysterious wide open spaces above us and this interactive process reflects an act of living or reality of life, which has eventually endowed us with the gift of language.
> Even after learning how to refer to the sky, it would surely be possible for us to recall in our mind the heart and the body movements of those days when we had no idea of what the sky was called. Unless we were able to do it, language would no longer function as it should and would end up

being a mere set of signs. Relabeling objects around us with one's heart and body which are already given their names, i.e. recreating language within oneself by removing the coating of conventional meaning which human society has put on is what is primarily meant by the acquisition of language. This is how language revives and survives.

The classroom observation report involving the handling of the poem "Language and Body" quoted from THE JAPANESE LANGUAGE has made it clear that what the teacher should have done was more than merely getting the students to address to the real sky by calling it the sky. He could have encouraged the students realize what they were thinking about or how they were feeling at the moment of looking up to the sky. He could have also prompted them to describe it the way they liked other than letting them use the familiar expression sky. He could have even let them all simply keep looking up to the sky without saying a word and this may well have been worth attempting."[2]

(Underlined by the author)

The aims of the classroom teaching targeted by those teachers, who are the members of the Teachers' Association of Japanese Language Education are said to lie in the creation of classroom teaching through which "language shall be brought to life" or "children shall be brought to life." This type of classroom teaching which can be described as "classroom teaching which brings .... to life" can hardly be seen to serve its purpose if there is a separation and/or a differenciation of heart and body and if knowledge is provided only through language.

This has been echoed by Professor Kyo Kobayashi's claim, which is as follows, in his paper entitled Language, Body and Transcendence, in which Alain and Merleau-Ponty are quoted, and also echoed by Shuntaro Tanigawa's claim in his above-mentioned comment. Both claims themselve need to be identified as essential knowledge composing the basis for the current and future teacher education.

As Alain is saying, "True language will echo in one's body, not in one's mind; rather will indirectly reach one's mind,"[3] and further quoting Merlea-Ponty as saying, "Language is an instance which is realized through one's body before it serves

> as a concept marker."[4] Take the word stiff for instance, it is recognized as a particular feeling associated with one's stiff back or stiff shoulder. Consequently, by regarding language as a tool, the way to look at "real understanding" from the viewpoint of the intellectual interpretation of linguistic meaning can be equated to "the ungrateful daughter"(Alain) who is not aware of one's original self.[5]

A series of quotation, which might appear to be a little too redundant have been referred to up to this point, or perhaps in the following section as well, not because our immediate concern is to elucidate the act of education or to validate the educational theory of identifying mind as body, but because it is the educational ideas reflected in all those quotations that need to be realized as knowledge base for all those who are committed in teaching profession. It is the knowledge of teachers' uncertainty that is essential to the recognition of the area of intuition and not the kind of knowledge pursued through either intellectual understanding or rational reasoning.

2. Uncertainty in understanding students

There is a book entitled Teacher-Student Relationships - Causes and Consequences written by Jere E. Brophy and Thomas L. Good, which focuses on the improvement of teacher education, both pre-service and in-service teacher training, from the viewpoint of teacher-student relationships based on empirical consideration and it abounds in insightful suggestions. As is implied in its subtitle, their major argument is that teacher-student relationship being seen in the light of causes and consequences, the teacher's varied attitudes or expectations will greatly affect on the mutual interactive relationships between them. In this connection, let me quote from Brophy and Good the section on one of the models for teacher expectation effects.

> Where teacher expectations have been inappropriate and rigid, students' classroom behavior and achievement levels will deviate from predictions based on past performance. Where expectations are inappropriately and rigidly high, the student will probably have many more than his share of interactions with the teacher during the year and will receive a great deal of encouragement and cajoling from the teacher. However, the teacher will be continually pushing him beyond his capacities and consequently he will often experience feelings of failure. Depending on the relative frequency and strengths of the former and latter factors, this student might achieve at higher than expected levels (if teacher determination and high expectations outweigh the frustrations associated with failure) or lower than expected levels (if he becomes so frustrated and anxious that he performs below his capacity despite the extra attention from the teacher). Even if he does better than expected, however, it may be at the cost of higher anxiety or other undesirable side effects.
>
> If the teacher's expectations are inappropriately and rigidly low, the student will have fewer interactions with the teacher, will get less praise and more criticism than his classmates receive in comparable situations, and will be likely to experience generally half-hearted teaching in which the teacher attempts to teach him less material and is less persistent in teaching him the material that he does teach. For his part the student will be likely to experience ego devaluation and a general sense of frustration and failure, leading him to withdraw increasingly from classroom participation and to begin to give up easily on his work assignments. End-of-the-year test results will likely show that this student achieved significantly less than would have been expected on the basis of his past performance.(6)
>
> (Underlined by the author)

In support of this model, as is self-evident, Brophy and Good adduces a basic methodological model of causes and consequences derived from modern science. His attempt is to draw a generalization of teacher-student relationships which govern classroom teaching. I have no intention to cast the slitest doubt upon the significance of his approach. Nevertheless, my primary concern is to draw your attention to the fact that the kind of approach based on modern scientism is most likely to result in a lack of consideration for the personal knowledge of individual students. Let me further draw your attention to the underlined part of the above quotation. Is it really the most likely that the teacher expectations, when they are higher than the students capacities (cause), will bring

the student feeling of failure(consequence)? We all know and agree from our experience that there are, of course, occasions on which the student ends up being in a situation like this, but on the other hand, there can be opposite occasions on which the student is encouraged and gains confidence.The individuality of each student, either physical or mental, can generate a positive reaction which we would the least expected. This might imply that the question of personal growth concerning the real existence of individual students is seen as a hindrance to the generalization of the student's learning effects. M.J. Langeveld, the founder of "Anthoropologie des kindes", exploits the phenomenological approach so as to interpret the specific world of individual children and as regards "human relations in education" he states by way of warning that we are in danger of falling in a trap of "depersonalization" or "dehumanization" caused by growing interest in studies of generalized human beings. Let me quote him as saying:

> In the place of man came generalities. The place of knowledge became identified with induction on the basis of collecting the specimen of the class in order to develop one generalization -say a specimen of flowers, a specimen of animals. Away from the individual up into the generalization. This individual human person is nothing but an intersection of completely general categories, says contemporary science calling itself psychology, and in its name is speaking such an intersection of general categories named I think. So dehumanization, reduction to generality, elimination of this child, this specific person is a basic characteristic of western thinking. Part of our history then is the battle against this nightmare; no person, a generality.(7)

The gist of the theoretical evidence in support of the necessity and validity for respecting the personal knowledge of the student was in classroom teaching

spelled out in the plenary session of the JUSTEC conference from July 10th to 13th, 1989 at the East-West Center, Hawaii under the title of "A Philosophical Approach to the 'Knowledge Base' in Teacher Education-From the Viewpoint of Personal Knowledge," therefore, I will dispense with further discussion here. Nevertheless, I would like to reiterate the importance to be attached to the student's personal knowledge next to the objective knowledge in general. The recognition of the importance of the student's personal knowledge in the classroom suggests that the student's academic achievements should not be evaluated only in the light of adducible recognition; intuition closely related to individuals' body itself shall be taken into account only because it has the element of uncertainty. And the recognition of this aspect will able be seen as one of the most important elements of knowledge base and it should already be shared by all those who are in teacher education.

3. Recognition of uncertainty in "teaching"

There have been innumerable studies and researches on knowledge base for teacher education, but large, they are mostly concerned with the pursuit of certainty of objective principles or methodologies in "teaching". Unlike those in the past, however, I came across the study of uncertainly in teaching, which was discussed in the paper called *Preparing Teachers for Uncertainly* by Floden, R.E. and Clark, C.M., Michigan University. There has been a great deal of discussion and debate on uncertainty in teaching, but there has been virtually no work as such on this subject so far published other than theirs.I do not pretend that I am in full agreement with their claim, but I admit that I was greatly enlightened by the novelty of their viewpoint and the scrutiny of their logical evidence. They take a rather optimistic view and argue that uncertainty of teaching will ultimately be eliminated as educational knowledge grows, but nevertheless they draw our attention to the fact that there still remain

other uncertainties which are inevitable. They go on to explain the reason why they are inevitable.

> Still other uncertainties are inevitable; these will always be present, for individual teachers and for the occupation as a whole. Uncertainties of knowledge are inevitable because teaching involves human beings, who are ultimately unpredictable and unknowable. Uncertainties of action are inevitable because teaching involves essential tensions-striving for one end requires giving up on others (at least for the moment)-so that no choice of action will be clearly preferable.(8)

They further claim that uncertainty concomitant with an act of teaching should and can be reduced and they suggest the following strategy for controlling it.

> Understanding could lead to despair if teachers had no hope of reducing uncertainty to manageable levels. Fortunately, uncertainty can be reduced, though not eliminated. Much of what goes on in teacher education helps. Knowledge may increase awareness of the possible extent of uncertainty, but it also raises the absolute level of certainty. Increasing pedagogical knowledge and skill helps teachers to make reasonable, rapid choices of action, to anticipate classroom events, to assess student understanding, and to find acceptable postures of instructional authority. Increasing subject matter knowledge increases certainty about instructional content.(9)

It is self-evident from the way they develop the argument for the reduction of uncertainty is based that the strategy they propose on the assumption that uncertainty in teaching can eventually be reduced in its varying degree of depth and scope. But undoubtedly this approach is far from being beyond the limit of modern rationalism and it is easy to note that

rational thinking stemmed from modern scientism reveals itself throughout their discussion. This paper on *Preparing Teachers for Uncertainty* might take surprise all those who are concerned with the study of knowledge base for teacher education and will surely open up a new dimension of knowledge base for further discussion. However, even if the reduction of uncertainty is brought under control by discovering or creating general rules of teaching on the one hand, there will on the other hand, appear a new dimension of unpredictable uncertainty corresponding to the extent to which the student's personal knowledge will be more recognized in the classroom.

At this point let me remind you that I have introduced the suggested use of the poem called 'Language and Body' at the beginning of this paper. I would like to focus on the earlier quotation from the general comment made by Shuntaro Tanigawa in response to the classroom observation report. Tanigawa states that it will be sufficient to get all the students together simply to keep looking up to the sky in silence and it may well be worth attempting. This type of recognition should not be seem as being restricted to that of a poet in the name of intuition, but should be seen as the one identified in a new dimension which all those engaged in teacher education can intuitively share. We should not in any way hesitate to acknowledge nor promote the significance of this type of recognition, because this approach will ensure flexible thinking of individual students and open up the way toward novel recognition through experience. The knowledge which is identified as one of the elements essential to knowledge base in teacher education is the knowledge which derives from inside one's body in the course of teaching. Under no circumstances should uncertainty in education be conceived as a negative element to be eliminated. Education always involves uncertainty and it is only when (the existence of) uncertainty is accepted that we begin to see a new dimension of education emerge where the personal knowledge and the quality of individual children are recognized and respected the way they should be.

Notes

(1) Shuntaro Tanigawa et al., eds. *The teaching Japanese in the classroom.* Teacher's Association of Japanese Language, Tokyo: Kokudosha, 1989, p.2.

(2) *Ibid.*, p.114 - 115.

(3) Alain, *Propos de literature.* (Flammarion, 1963, p.14.) *The translated works of Alain in Japanese, vol.8.* Tokyo: Hakusuisha, p.22.

(4) Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception.* (Gallimand, 1945, p.272.) Japanese translation: *Phenomenology of perception.* 2nd ed. Tokyo: Misuzushobo, p.49.

(5) Kyo Kobayashi, 'Language, body, and transcendence'. Shuji Wada et al. eds. *Man's life and goal of education-Educational theory of new naturalism.* Kyoto: Showado, 1989, p.267.

(6) J.E. Brophy, and T.L. Good, *Teacher-student relationships - Causes and consequences,* Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1974, p.40. Tokio Hamana et al., Japanese translation: *Human relationships between teachers and students - basis for a new educational approach.* Kyoto: Kitaojishobo, 1985, p.49 - 50.

(7) M.T. Langeveld, 'Human relationship in education', 1973 (Keynote speech presented in the Tokyo International Conference sponsored by World Education Fellowship.) Japanese translation: Atsumi Okada et al. *Reflection of education and human beings.* Tokyo: Tamagawa University Press, 1974, p.142 - 143.

(8) R. E. Floden and C.M. Clark, *Preparing teachers for uncertainty.* Teachers College Record, vol.89, no.4, Summer, 1988, p.507.

(9) *Ibid.*, p.516